

NEWS RELEASE

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Carol A. Murray, Commissioner

For Immediate Release

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**INSPECTION RESULTS PROMPT IMMEDIATE WEIGHT LIMIT POSTING
OF MEMORIAL BRIDGE (US ROUTE 1) IN PORTSMOUTH TO SIX TONS**
BRIDGE LIMITED TO PASSENGER CARS AND AMBULANCES

New Hampshire Department of Transportation Commissioner Carol Murray today ordered the immediate weight limit posting of Memorial Bridge carrying US Route 1 over the Piscataqua River in Portsmouth to six tons. The decision to limit the Memorial Bridge to passenger cars only follows an in-depth inspection of the bridge that has confirmed significant structural steel deterioration in the floor system of the lift span. Ambulances will also be allowed to continue to use the bridge.

“The Memorial Bridge is not unsafe,” Commissioner Murray says. “However, given the most recent inspection findings, I am acting in a precautionary manner until these localized repairs can be made and a more detailed analysis completed.”

The six-ton weight posting of the Memorial Bridge will be in effect later today (December 5, 2003). All vehicles weighing in excess of six tons must seek alternative routes, which may include the nearby Sarah Long Bridge and the Interstate 95 “High Level” Bridge. Variable message signs will alert vehicles to the weight posting. The State of Maine, the communities of Portsmouth, New Hampshire and Kittery, Maine, and the U.S. Coast Guard have been notified of the weight posting limitation. This weight posting will not affect Memorial Bridge lifts necessary for Piscataqua River Traffic.

The New Hampshire Department of Transportation plans to advertise a contract for immediate repairs as soon as possible. Once the work begins, repairs of the structural steel are expected to take two to four weeks to complete. It is anticipated that the repairs will allow an increase in the acceptable vehicle weight limit and posting.

A private consultant, HNTB Corporation, of Boston, MA, has been conducting an in-depth examination of the 82-year old lift bridge that has included structural, mechanical, electrical and underwater inspections. The cost of the inspection project is \$672,000.

The inspection findings will be used in developing rehabilitation or replacement options for Memorial Bridge and Scott Avenue Bridge. Current plans call for a \$20 million rehabilitation project beginning in 2007.